



KENTUCKY BOARD OF NURSING
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ADVISORY OPINION STATEMENT

ROLES OF NURSES IN SUPERFICIAL WOUND CLOSURE

The Kentucky Board of Nursing is authorized by Kentucky Revised Statutes (KRS) Chapter 314 to regulate nurses, nursing education and practice, promulgate regulations and to issue advisory opinions on nursing practice, in order to assure that safe and effective nursing care is provided by nurses to the citizens of the Commonwealth.

The Kentucky Board of Nursing issues advisory opinions as to what constitutes safe nursing practice. As such, an opinion is not a regulation of the Board and does not have the force and effect of law. It is issued as a guideline to licensees who wish to engage in safe nursing practice, and to facilitate the delivery of safe, effective nursing care to the public.

**Opinion: ROLES OF NURSES IN
SUPERFICIAL WOUND CLOSURE**

Approved Date:

Revised: 06/85; 12/92; 10/00

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Accountability and Responsibility of Nurses

In accordance with KRS 314.021(2), nurses are responsible and accountable for making decisions that are based upon the individuals' educational preparation and current clinical competence in nursing, and requires licensees to practice nursing with reasonable skill and safety. Nursing practice should be consistent with the *Kentucky Nursing Laws*, established standards of practice, and be evidence based.

Rationale for Advisory Opinion

Numerous inquiries regarding the scope of nursing practice in the performance of stapling and/or suturing and in the removal of staples and sutures have been received by the Kentucky Board of Nursing. After study of the issues and concerns regarding both the performance of stapling and suturing procedures and the removal of staples and sutures, the Kentucky Board of Nursing issued the following advisory opinions.

Advisory Opinion:

Stapling and Suturing

The performance of stapling and/or suturing for superficial wound closure, as prescribed by a documented order of the physician, Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) or physician assistant (PA) is within the scope of registered nursing practice¹; however, the suturing of muscle, nerve or tendon is not within the scope of registered¹ nursing practice.

The performance of stapling and/or suturing is not within the scope of licensed practical nursing practice.

Registered nurses who perform stapling and suturing for superficial wound closure should be educationally prepared and clinically competent to perform such acts as required by KRS 314.021(2) of the *Kentucky Nursing Laws*, and should have documented evidence of educational preparation and clinical competence.

In the performance of stapling and/or suturing for superficial wound closure, the registered nurse should:

- 1) Be knowledgeable of the potential complications and adverse reactions which may result from the procedure(s).
- 2) Possess the knowledge and ability to recognize adverse reactions and to take appropriate nursing intervention as needed.
- 3) Perform the procedure(s) in accordance with the established written agency policies and procedures agreed upon by medical and nursing leadership and which are consistent with the definition of "registered nursing practice" as stated in KRS 314.011(6).

Removal of Staples and Sutures

The removal of superficial staples and/or sutures, as prescribed by a documented order of the physician, APRN or PA is within the scope of both registered nursing and licensed practical nursing practice. Nurses who remove staples and/or sutures should be educationally prepared and clinically competent to perform such acts as required by KRS 314.021(2) of the *Kentucky Nursing Laws*, and should have documented evidence of educational preparation and clinical competence. The nurse should perform this procedure according to written, facility policies and procedures agreed upon by medical and nursing leadership which are consistent with the definition of registered nursing or licensed practical nursing practice.

Application of Topical Adhesives

It is the advisory opinion of the Board that the application of topical adhesives for superficial wound closure as prescribed by a documented order of the physician, APRN, or PA is within the scope of nursing practice. Nurses should be educationally prepared and clinically competent in the application of such agents for wound closure. The application of topical adhesives should be performed according to appropriately established written facility policies and procedures agreed upon by medical and nursing leadership and which are consistent with the *Kentucky Nursing Laws*.

¹Registered Nurses who perform stapling and suturing procedures in perioperative nursing practice should refer to Advisory Opinion Statement #8 "Role of the Registered Nurse First Assistant". The statement is available on the Board website at <http://kbn.ky.gov/practice/Documents/aos08.pdf>

Determining Scope of Practice

KRS 314.021(2) holds all nurses individually responsible and accountable for the individual's acts based upon the nurse's education and experience. Each nurse must exercise professional and prudent judgment in determining whether the performance of a given act is within the scope of practice for which the nurse is both licensed and clinically competent to perform. In addition to this advisory opinion statement, the Kentucky Board of Nursing has published "Scope of Practice Determination Guidelines" which contains a decision tree chart providing guidance to nurses in determining whether a selected act is within an individual nurse's scope of practice now or in the future. A copy of the RN and LPN guidelines may be downloaded from the Board's website <http://kbn.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/74A5FF75-543D-4E12-8839-720B7623DA87/0/ScopeDeterminGuidelines.pdf> and a copy of the APRN guidelines may be downloaded from the Board's website <http://kbn.ky.gov/practice/Documents/APRN%20Scope%20of%20Practice%20%20Decision%20Making%20Model.pdf>

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Applicable Statutes From the *Kentucky Nursing Laws*¹

KRS 314.011(6) defines "registered nursing practice" as:

...The performance of acts requiring substantial specialized knowledge, judgment, and nursing skill based upon the principles of psychological, biological, physical, and social sciences in the application of the nursing process in:

- a) The care, counsel, and health teaching of the ill, injured or infirm;
- b) The maintenance of health or prevention of illness of others;
- c) The administration of medication and treatment as prescribed by a physician, physician assistant, dentist, or advanced practice registered nurse and as further authorized or limited by the board, and which are consistent either with American Nurses' Association Scope and Standards of Practice or with standards of practice established by nationally accepted organizations of registered nurses. Components of medication administration include, but are not limited to:
 - 1. Preparing and giving medications in the prescribed dosage, route, and frequency, including dispensing medications only as defined in subsection (17)(b) of this section;
 - 2. Observing, recording, and reporting desired effects, untoward reactions, and side effects of drug therapy;
 - 3. Intervening when emergency care is required as a result of drug therapy;

¹ A copy of the *Kentucky Nursing Laws* may be downloaded from the Kentucky Board of Nursing website at <http://kbn.ky.gov>.

4. Recognizing accepted prescribing limits and reporting deviations to the prescribing individual;
 5. Recognizing drug incompatibilities and reporting interactions or potential interactions to the prescribing individual; and
 6. Instructing an individual regarding medications;
- d) The supervision, teaching of, and delegation to other personnel in the performance of activities relating to nursing care; and
- e) The performance of other nursing acts which are authorized or limited by the board, and which are consistent either with American Nurses' Association Standards of Practice or with Standards of Practice established by nationally accepted organizations of registered nurses.

KRS 314.011(10) defines "licensed practical nursing practice" as:

...The performance of acts requiring knowledge and skill such as are taught or acquired in approved schools for practical nursing in:

- a) The observing and caring for the ill, injured, or infirm under the direction of a registered nurse, advanced practice registered nurse, physician assistant, licensed physician, or dentist;
- b) The giving of counsel and applying procedures to safeguard life and health, as defined and authorized by the board;
- c) The administration of medication or treatment as authorized by a physician, physician assistant, dentist, or advanced practice registered nurse and as further authorized or limited by the board which is consistent with the National Federation of Licensed Practical Nurses or with Standards of Practice established by nationally accepted organizations of licensed practical nurses;
- d) Teaching, supervising, and delegating except as limited by the board; and
- e) The performance of other nursing acts which are authorized or limited by the board and which are consistent with the National Federation of Licensed Practical Nurses' Standards of Practice or with Standards of Practice established by nationally accepted organizations of licensed practical nurses.

KRS 314.011(8) defines "advanced practice registered nursing practice" as:

"Advanced practice registered nursing" means the performance of additional acts by registered nurses who have gained advanced clinical knowledge and skills through an accredited education program that prepares the registered nurse for one (1) of the four (4) APRN roles; who are certified by the American Nurses' Association or other nationally established organizations or agencies recognized by the board to certify registered nurses for advanced practice registered nursing as a certified nurse practitioner, certified registered nurse anesthetist, certified nurse midwife, or clinical nurse specialist; and who certified in at least one (1) population focus. The additional acts shall, subject to approval of the board, include but not be limited to prescribing treatment, drugs, devices, and ordering diagnostic tests. Advanced practice registered nurses who engage in these additional acts shall be authorized to issue prescriptions for and dispense nonscheduled legend drugs as defined in KRS 217.905 and to issue prescriptions for but not to dispense Schedules II through V controlled substances as classified in KRS 218A.060, 218A.070, 218A.080, 218A.090, 218A.100, 218A.110, 218A.120, and 218A.130, under the conditions set forth in KRS 314.042 and regulations promulgated by

the Kentucky Board of Nursing on or before August 15, 2006. ... (c) The performance of these additional acts shall be consistent with the certifying organization or agencies' scopes and standards of practice recognized by the board by administrative regulation;...